**Episode 30 – Correcting Your Records**

**INFORMATION:** Discuss the importance of records reviews and how to utilize the Bureau for Correction of Naval Records (BCNR) process to do that.

**History Segment: Battle of Hampton Roads**

https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/wars-and-events/the-american-civil-war--1861-1865/css-virginia-destroys-uss-cumberland-and-uss-congress--8-march-1.html

At mid-day on 8 March 1862, CSS Virginia (formerly USS Merrimack, and persistently mid-identified by that name or as "Merrimac") steamed down the Elizabeth River from Norfolk and entered Hampton Roads. It was the newly converted ironclad's trial trip, a short voyage that would deeply influence naval opinion at home and abroad.

Anchored on the opposite side of Hampton Roads were five major Union warships: the frigate Congress and large sloop of war Cumberland off Newport News, and the frigates St. Lawrence, Minnesota and Roanoke a few miles to the east, off Fortress Monroe. All were powerful conventional wooden men o'war. Minnesota and Roanoke, of the same type as the pre-war Merrimack, had auxiliary steam propulsion, but the other three were propelled by sails alone, and thus were at the mercy of wind conditions and the availability of tugs. As Virginia crossed the Roads, looking (as one witness described her) "like the roof of a very big barn belching forth smoke as from a chimney on fire", the Union ships called their crews to quarters and prepared for action. Turning west, the Confederate ironclad shrugged off steady fire from ships and shore batteries as she steamed past the Congress. Firing her heavy cannon into both ships, she pushed her ram into Cumberland's starboard side. The stricken ship began to sink, though her gun crews kept up a heavy fire as she went down. In the words of one of Cumberland's enemies, "No ship was ever fought more gallantly."

Virginia backed clear, tearing off most of her iron ram, and slowly turned toward the Congress, which had gone aground while trying to get underway. Confederate gunners put several raking shells into the frigate's hull, and maintained a relentless fire as they came alongside. After an hour's battle, in which Congress' crew suffered heavy casualties, she raised the white flag of surrender. As the Confederates began to take off her crew, several men on both sides were hit by gunfire from ashore, among them the Virginia's Commanding Officer, Captain Franklin Buchanan, who ordered Congress set afire with hot shot. She blazed into the night, exploding as the fire reached her powder magazines about two hours after midnight.

Virginia had meanwhile made a brief demonstration in the direction of the big steam frigate Minnesota, which had also gone aground. However, with the day's light about to fade, the ironclad turned back toward the southern side of Hampton Roads and anchored. Though two of her guns had their muzzles shot off and most external fittings were swept away or rendered useless, she had dramatically demonstrated the horrible vulnerability of unarmored wooden warships when confronted with a hostile ironclad, and was still battleworthy. Her casualties, less than two-dozen, were removed and command passed from the injured Buchanan to Lieutenant Catesby ap R. Jones, who would take Virginia out the next day to deal with the Minnesota.

At dawn on 9 March 1862, CSS Virginia prepared for renewed combat. The previous day, she had utterly defeated two big Federal warships, Congress and Cumberland, destroying both and killing more than 240 of their crewmen. Today, she expected to inflict a similar fate on the grounded steam frigate Minnesota and other enemy ships, probably freeing the lower Chesapeake Bay region of Union seapower and the land forces it supported. Virginia would thus contribute importantly to the Confederacy's military, and perhaps diplomatic, fortunes.

However, as they surveyed the opposite side of Hampton Roads, where the Minnesota and other potential victims awaited their fate, the Confederates realized that things were not going to be so simple. There, looking small and low near the lofty frigate, was a vessel that could only be USS Monitor, the Union Navy's own ironclad, which had arrived the previous evening after a perilous voyage from New York. Though her crew was exhausted and their ship untested, the Monitor was also preparing for action.

Undeterred, Virginia steamed out into Hampton Roads. Monitor positioned herself to protect the immobile Minnesota, and a general battle began. Both ships hammered away at each other with heavy cannon, and tried to run down and hopefully disable the other, but their iron-armored sides prevented vital damage. Virginia's smokestack was shot away, further reducing her already modest mobility, and Monitor's technological teething troubles hindered the effectiveness of her two eleven-inch guns, the Navy's most powerful weapons. Ammunition supply problems required her to temporarily pull away into shallower water, where the deep-drafted Virginia could not follow, but she always covered the Minnesota.

Soon after noon, Virginia gunners concentrated their fire on Monitor's pilothouse, a small iron blockhouse near her bow. A shell hit there blinded Lieutenant John L. Worden, the Union ship's Commanding Officer, forcing another withdrawal until he could be relieved at the conn. By the time she was ready to return to the fight, Virginia had turned away toward Norfolk.

The first battle between ironclad warships had ended in stalemate, a situation that lasted until Virginia's self-destruction two months later. However, the outcome of combat between armored equals, compared with the previous day's terrible mis-match, symbolized the triumph of industrial age warfare. The value of existing ships of the line and frigates was heavily discounted in popular and professional opinion. Ironclad construction programs, already underway in America and Europe, accelerated. The resulting armored warship competition would continue into the 1940s, some eight decades in the future.

**I. Introduction**

A. Attention (The accuracy of your records are ultimately, your responsibility.)

B. Motivation (It’s important you know the mechanisms available to you so that you can correct any errors or injustices in your record.)

C. Overview (The Navy is a human organization. It’s imperfect, and as such requires mechanisms to right wrongs. Sometimes they’re accidents, and as we’ll discuss, sometimes they are deliberate. Processes exist for you to plead your case, one of which is deeply misunderstood or not known – the Bureau for Correction of Naval Records - BCNR.)

D. Plug “Ask DGUTS!” segment. dontgiveuptheshippodcast@gmail.com

**II. Body**

\*Encourage to go to NPC and explore the resources…

A. Main Point 1 (What is a BCNR?)– Acts as liaison for Navy Personnel Command (NPC) to the Board for Correction of Naval Records. The BCNR was created by Congress in 1947 to provide a method for correction of errors or removal of injustices from current and former Navy and Marine Corps member's records without the necessity for private legislation (Law governs BCNR under 10 U.S.C. Sec 1551-1557). It is a separate shore activity under the direction and supervision of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

1. Sub-point (Reference) – SECNAVINST 5420.193 is the reference that establishes procedures for making an application and the consideration of applications for correction of military records of current and former members of the Navy and Marine Corps by the Secretary of the Navy acting through the BCNR under Title 10 USC Sect. 1552.

2. Sub-point (Form) – DD Form 149 (Application for Correction of Military Record Under the Provisions of Title 10, USC Section 1552), December 2014 revision. In block 5 you will state the specific injustice you are requesting they review. In block 6 you explain why you believe the record is unjust. It’s common to attach a separate written statement for both of these blocks as you will generally not fit in in the space provided, simply writing “see attached”.

In block 9, you provide any evidence you have to demonstrate that the record is unjust and support your claim to get it fixed. These should be COPIES of whatever original documents you have reflecting that information. There are specific instructions for completing the DD Form 149 on page 2 of the form, but utilize your personnel folks for help if needed. Or hit me up, I’ve done it a few times on behalf of my Sailors.

http://www.esd.whs.mil/Directives/forms/dd0001\_0499/

B. Main Point 2 (What’s if for?): So now that we know what it is, what’s it used for? Well it’s what it sounds like, to right a wrong; or correct an injustice. It can be anything from a missing award that you don’t have a copy of but could have gotten you advanced to an extensive case of retaliation by superiors which I’ll discuss later.

1. Sub-point (The Process) – The actual application process is incredibly simple. You complete the DD Form 149 which is a two page document that really only has one page of data required by the applicant. You will need to provide supporting evidence, so copies of those documents should go along with a detailed explanation in support of your claim (blocks 5 and 6). Once complete, you sign the application, put it all in an envelope and mail it to the address for your applicable service at the bottom of the DD Form 149. That’s it. Now, based on this board being the only of it’s kind and the volume of applications they receive, it takes time. I would say, on average, 6-9 months to get a response but it varies depending on how much work they have. So you have to wait. Make sure you keep your mailing address up to date in NSIPS so the decision makes it to you.

C. Main Point 3 (Does it work?): IN MY EXPERIENCE, yes. I have sent two separate BCNR requests on behalf of Sailors that worked for me directly or indirectly and both were approved. The first was a Sailor who missed an advancement exam while deployed to Iraq (by no fault of his own) and was unavailable to take the make-up exam. So when he got to us, we went through the process of applying the exam score from the exam he took for E6 (on which he did not advance) and applying it to the cycle he missed (which is the process NAC uses, and would have had him advance two cycles earlier). We submitted this package and he went from a senior Second Class to an E7 exam eligible First Class overnight. He received over 20,000$ in back pay and not only made board, but was advanced to Chief Petty Officer that year as well. Pretty huge change, and an obviously positive result. The second, was a case in which a Sailor was missing an award from her record and did not have the original certificate. She tried to get it from her previous command, and they did not have it. It had been recorded on an evaluation and she corresponded with her CO at the time who recalled approving the award. The command was initially going to re-create the award, but then decided against it for some reason. We submitted the BCNR, with only the evaluation and emails as evidence. I told her that even I thought the evidence was not conclusive, though compelling, and she should temper her expectations. It came back approved. The award would have advanced her to First Class one cycle earlier to which she received over 10,000$ in back pay and was eligible for Chief one year earlier. So you can see, not only does it work, but it’s a worth a shot!

D. Main Point 3 (Injustices): This episode was inspired by a young man that reached out to me regarding his experiences with this process. But there’s a lot more to the story. That will be a whole episode on it’s own in which I interview this young man and we delve into the way in which he used this process, and others, to right his wrongs. I also want to take this time to drive home something I spoke about during the enlisted evaluations episode. The “statement” blocks. In

**III. Conclusion**

A. Summary (We talked about…)

1. What the Bureau for Correction of Naval Records is and what it’s for…

2. The process of applying and if it in fact works…

3. And shared some stories of why it’s so important to Sailors like HM3…

B. Re-motivation (It’s important you know the mechanisms available to you so that you can correct any errors or injustices in your record.)

C. Closing –

D. Plug “Ask DGUTS!” segment. dontgiveuptheshippodcast@gmail.com